

CITY OF TACOMA PRESENTATION – ADVANCE MATERIALS

HOUSING FIRST FAQs

1. Describe the partnerships between the City and Service Providers

From the inception of the City of Tacoma's Housing First and Encampment Elimination Initiative success has hinged on multiple partnerships within the Community.

- *The City and the County both provide funding to the agencies providing Housing First. We work with the agencies to align our requirements to make the*
- *The Tacoma Police Department- they have assisted us in identifying and locating many individuals who are eligible for Housing First*
- *The Shelters-when possible many chronic homeless individuals will spend time in the shelters.*
- *The PATH mental health outreach team-they act as a liaison to many of the City's chronic homeless individuals who are living on the streets or in the shelters.*
- *BOSS*
- *Encampment Clean-up Crew*
- *Needle Exchange Group*
- *Homeless Services Continuum*

2. Housing First Costs...What are we paying for?

Leasing/Utilities – 40%

Services – 40%

Operations/Administration – 20%

3. What are the costs per individual?

Average client cost \$1400 per month - \$16,800 annually.

Average client cost when not housed - \$35,000 annually.

4. What is Housing First?

Housing First model focuses on providing individuals housing first, with no requirements (besides being a good tenant). Services are offered and always available to clients (when they are interested and ready).

The housing provided in Housing First is permanent supportive housing. The goal is for individuals to be permanently housed for as long as possible.

5. How do you deal with neighbor concerns?

We work with our partners to quickly respond and address any issues or concerns that arise. Surprisingly, there are not that many neighbor concerns. At scattered sites, the neighbors are usually not even aware they have a Housing First client living next to them.

6. How clustered is the housing downtown?

With the scattered site model the housing is spread out across the City and the County. From the start of the program an effort was made to spread the housing out.

With a secured access building (Randall Townsend and the New Nativity House) there is a higher concentration of individuals in smaller areas.

7. Has the Housing First program been effective?

Yes, since the inception of the Housing First Program, over 150 chronic homeless individuals have been housed and are off the streets and out of the jails and emergency rooms.

To quote an MDC worker who has been around since the beginning of the program, "...this program continues to improve and is wildly successful".

8. What does success look like for these clients?

Success is unique to each individual. Some clients get into school or find work; others find an improved quality of life by getting services and dealing with nagging health issues. For many, sobriety itself is success. For others just being off the street and permanently housed is a success.

9. Do any of these clients transition into other forms of permanent housing?

There have been multiple clients who have stabilized, got a job and no longer needed the services and moved into unsubsidized and subsidized housing. (Rental or Section 8).

10. What services are these clients getting while in housing?

The foundation of Housing First is the Harm Reduction Model- is an approach that helps clients reduce the harm associated with risky activities by incorporating practical techniques and strategies. Clients are able to receive any services they need or want. A big piece of the Housing First Program is clients choosing what services they want. They decide when they are ready for services. (mh counseling,

drug/alcohol counseling, basic health care). Clients also receive a wide range of life skills (shopping, cooking and doing laundry)

11. What is Motivational Interviewing?

Motivational interviewing is a key piece of the Housing First Model. It involves:

- The case manager meeting the client where they are at and working from there.*
- It is the client's task, not the counselor's, to steer their ship!*
- Oftentimes involves working with a client through his or her own ambivalence.*
- the case worker respects the client's autonomy and freedom of choice (and consequences) regarding his or her own behavior.*

12. What is the PATH Team?

The PATH team is made up of mental health professionals from Comprehensive Mental Health. They act as the Gatekeepers to the HF program. Usually they are the ones who have a connection to the clients and are responsible for a majority of the Housing First referrals. They know many of these clients by name.

13. For what population is Housing First is targeted?

All Housing First clients must meet the HUD definition of Chronic Homelessness - someone who has experienced homelessness for a year or longer, or who has experienced at least four episodes of homelessness in the last three years and has a disability

Housing First is a program set up to help many of the most challenging and in need individuals in the City. Most have multiple barriers to being housed.

14. Have the homeless encampments been eliminated?

City of Tacoma continues to prioritize the elimination of homeless encampments through: identification, clean-up and monitoring

-2013 – 175 homeless encampments in Tacoma

-2014 – 86 homeless encampments in Tacoma

Over 200 encampments cleaned within the City of Tacoma since 2012. Many of these encampments have stayed clean, others have become re-populated. Although challenging, we have had great success eliminating many of the encampments in the City of Tacoma. Many of the individuals have been connected to services.

15. What is the process the City uses for cleaning the encampments?

The City of Tacoma and our partners have developed a Homeless Encampment Clean-up - Standard Operating Procedure (SOP). Below is a brief summary of the SOP:

Encampments are:

-identified,

-PATH goes to encampment; individuals are offered services and begin the conversation of moving individuals along.

-TPD and/or City Homeless Services visit the site and once again have a conversation with individuals about moving along.

-Encampment Clean-up Crew comes in and the encampment is cleaned.

-If there are any issues TPD will assist with any needed services.

-Area is monitored for future activity

-When possible, community monitoring plans are set up.

Business Outreach Support Specialist

Neighborhood and Community Services-MH/Homeless Services

The City of Tacoma is excited to offer a new valuable tool for the business in throughout the City. The Business Outreach Support Specialist (BOSS) will work directly with local businesses that have been negatively impacted by homelessness-related issues. The BOSS will respond to homelessness-related issues, concerns and needs. This may also include other unwelcoming activities that occur at many of Tacoma's business and neighborhood communities. Oftentimes these incidents occur in front of or on the property of businesses.

The BOSS will specifically focus on offering a comprehensive and collaborative approach to providing resources and services to many of the City's visible chronic homelessness.

The goal is to quickly respond to the needs of the businesses and the needs of the community and the needs of the individuals experiencing homelessness. The end product will be businesses free of blight that provide a safe and welcoming front door to the people within our community. The employees will also be educated in how to respond to future homeless-related issues.

Success for the BOSS will hinge on the building of relationships with local business owners and staff. This will include attending neighborhood business district meetings, local business staff meetings, surrounding community meetings and one-on-one meetings with business owners.

The BOS will coordinate with businesses to come up with monitoring plans and strategies to keep their businesses clear of future homeless-related activity. This will include assisting with the clean-up of homeless encampments and/or debris left behind. Here is a list of what businesses can expect from the BOS:

- After hours, on the weekends, when you need it
 - Quick response to calls coming in from Tacoma's business community.
 - Dedicated phone line connecting City of Tacoma businesses to a BOSS
 - Response within 2 hours? (longer for late/middle of the night)
- Individualized response to the needs of local businesses.
 - Developing a monitoring plan
 - Assisting with clean-up of area
 - CPTED review of the property
 - Attending meetings/speaking directly with staff
- Quick response to the needs of individuals experiencing homelessness.
 - Engagement and de-escalation skills
 - Housing and Shelter options
 - Mental health and drug and alcohol treatment services

Standard Operating Procedure Encampment Clean-ups in Tacoma

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Scope and Applicability

The City of Tacoma has identified a number of distinct homeless encampment areas that pose serious public health and safety concerns for those living in and around them. Not only are they unfit for human habitation, but some of the individuals have been linked with illegal activity either as victims or perpetrators. There have been repeated attempts to clean these areas including housing some of the individuals in the City's Housing First Chronic Homeless Project. The re-population, monitoring and clean-up of these encampment areas continues to be an ongoing effort. The City of Tacoma is committed to eliminate the encampments with an ongoing clean up and monitoring schedule.

The success of this service depends on the joint collaboration of many groups including; the City of Tacoma Homeless Services Manager, the Tacoma Police Department, the PATH Team, the Public Works Department – Abatement Crew, community groups, local businesses and citizens from the area.

Summary of Method

1. Encampments are identified by concerned community members calling the Encampment Hotline (253-830-6500) or the City's Homeless Services Manager (Colin DeForrest-253-591-2008 or 253-312-2641) and leaving a detailed message with the location of the encampment and any other relevant information
2. The City's Homeless Services Staff will pass the encampment information along the PATH team. The PATH team will visit the identified area and make contact with any individuals residing in the encampment. The PATH team will offer resources and referrals for services to interested individuals.
3. The Homeless Services Manager notifies the TPD-Community Liaison Officer of an active encampment area. When necessary and safety permitting, TPD will visit the encampment area. Any remaining individuals actively staying in the encampment area will be asked to "move-on" and warned not to return to this area. Anyone remaining will be informed the encampment area will be cleaned and cleared within the next 48 hours.
4. After giving the individuals allotted time to move-on with their belongings, the City Abatement Crew will go to the encampment area and clean-up whatever debris/remains are left.

5. Encampment area will be regularly monitored for any signs of future activity.

**In addition to the procedures stated above, there will be ongoing community participation, communication and occasional meetings to identify monitoring plans and address the status of the sites.

Definitions

- **Encampment** – Open spaces throughout the City where homeless individuals set up tents, and other forms of makeshift sleeping and living areas. These areas are often unsafe and unsanitary.
- **City of Tacoma's Housing First Chronic Homeless Project**
The City of Tacoma began the Housing First program in 2006. It began as a way to help eliminate the encampments and currently houses chronic homeless individuals identified in the city limits. "Housing First" is an approach that centers on providing homeless individuals with housing quickly and then provides services as needed. The program has been in operation for 5 years.
- **The PATH Team**
PATH stands for Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness. This PATH team is a program of Comprehensive Mental Health, a private, non-profit, state licensed mental health center in Tacoma.

Safety

- Precaution must be taken when visiting any of the encampment sites. Some individuals occupying the encampments may have mental health or substance abuse issues and may not respond favorably to interactions with others. There may also be drug paraphernalia, such as needles, pipes, etc. It is important to wear sturdy shoes with a thick sole to prevent in damage to the feet. Also, it may be necessary to wear long pants and long sleeves to prevent scratches and scrapes to skin surfaces. It is important for visitors to travel in pairs and notify another staff member about their location. Having a safety plan in place will reduce dangerous incidents.

Enforcement

- If individuals are identified as felons or have outstanding warrants, the TPD may make arrests or take these individuals into custody.
- The Community Services Work Crew removes garbage, drug paraphernalia and other debris from the area after “campers’ have been removed.
- Community Partners will be called in to remove large amounts of hazardous materials (HAZMAT).
- Public Works, in some cases, where it is appropriate, will post “No Trespass” signs and in some cases will construct fencing to provide barriers to entrances.
- The City will have recurring Encampment areas assessed for Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED). Assessment recommendations may include fencing, invasive removal, lighting and other deterrents.